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FROM THE DASAF

WHAT MAKES SAFETY A SUCCESS?

By now, readers of this column should know I'm a big advocate of safety culture. The actual definitions of that term, however, can be as varied as the missions we perform every day. That's why it's important we have some measures in place as a litmus test for leaders looking to evaluate their culture and climate. The following six criteria can help you determine both your strongest and weakest areas regarding safety, and also give you ideas for enhancing your existing risk management programs.

First, senior leaders must be visibly committed to the safety program. That means, first and foremost, that you never tolerate injuries and losses as the price of doing business. The fact is - every Soldier and piece of equipment lost to a preventable incident increases our costs exponentially. Truly engaged leaders recognize this and do everything within their power to prevent accidents in the first place, not simply mitigate the effects of them after the fact. This requires a shift in focus from accidents, to near misses, close calls and deliberate targeting of risky behavior.

Junior leaders have to be even more engaged. With funding shortfalls and our operational drawdown nearing completion, the force is shrinking, leaving junior leaders with more day-to-day responsibility than they've perhaps ever faced. While their first instinct might be to let safety slide, they'll find they have much less work to do if their Soldiers conduct their missions safely and to standard. In addition to the human cost, a Class A or B accident consumes a lot of time on the administrative end with paperwork, investigations, and all that goes along with disability or loss of life. Safety is directly tied to efficiency, and it's incumbent on junior leaders to be active participants in the process and ensure their Soldiers understand the impact of risk management on all their activities.

Leaders should focus on safety as part of their performance. This should not be confused with making safety a punitive and linear process, however — we've spent too many years getting away from the "check the block" safety mentality to go back now. Instead, leaders should treat safety as an integrated part of the mission, with detailed steps to meet each milestone during execution. Having a plan is an integral part of establishing a functional safety culture, and while it should be focused on detail and accountability, those in charge must be careful not to micromanage. In the end, Soldiers doing the hard work every day are the owners of the unit safety program, and their leaders should respect them as such.

Soldiers have to be active participants in the process. Safety is one of those things they could easily shrug off as an unnecessary requirement designed by leadership to quash their fun. We know that's not the case, but we would do well to remember our feelings on authority at 18 or 20 years old. That's why Soldiers have to be continuously and actively involved in safety, so they learn early on the inherent value in it and have a voice in what works. When they see that risk management is essential to being a smart warrior, not a downer, we'll have won a small battle in the fight against accidental loss.

The safety program has to fit your unit culture. The Army is a regulatory organization by nature, but individual units have latitude to make the regulations work for them. The same is true of safety. It's not realistic to expect an approach that works for an aviation unit to be identical in an infantry battalion. Their distinct cultures are too far apart to force a template on one or the other, but the beauty of safety is its adaptability to the circumstances. All units share a common safety goal — elimination of preventable loss — but they don't have to take the same road there.

The final criterion is a culmination of the preceding five: The safety program must be positively perceived by all stakeholders: leader, Soldier and Civilian. Organizations need a feedback loop to stay on the edge of safety innovation, and your formation's attitude regarding the program is the most valuable feedback of all. When your Soldiers and Civilian employees are actively engaging in the process, you've closed the loop — for now. Sustaining that momentum requires you to start all over again, constantly evaluating successes (and sometimes failures) and making changes when needed.

Now that you have the criteria, how does your unit measure up? As I've said before, evaluating safety culture is much more involved than simply comparing today's accident figures versus last year's. It's not a straightforward process, and it requires some deep thought from leadership on what has and hasn't worked in the past. I can't tell you whether you're succeeding or not; only you have the answer to that. Seeking it, however, is well worth the effort, and I challenge you to take that effort on since the risks inherent to spring and summer are already here.

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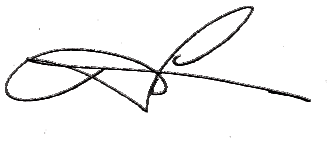
Thank you for what you do every day for our Army and our Soldiers, and please let me know how I can help you reach your safety goals. Working together, we will get there!

Army Safe is Army Strong!

TIMOTHY J. EDENS
Brigadier General, USA
Director of Army Safety



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WORDS TO LIVE BY

SHARM L. KUCH
U.S. Army Aviation Special Operations Command
Simmons Army Airfield
Fort Bragg, N.C

I looked outside the cockpit and thought, "This isn't right!" The reflections from my red anti-collision beacons had the clouds spinning in opposite directions. But how could that be? Maybe it was my brain that was spinning.

I had loaded six Soldiers into my Pilatus Porter aircraft as we prepared to take off at night under instrument meteorological conditions. My mission was to transport the Soldiers from one airport to another. We received our instrument flight rules clearance, departed and, after our initial turn to our on-course heading, entered IMC. It became immediately obvious we needed to turn off the white strobe light that was flashing brightly against the clouds. That's when the interesting part started.

Our aircraft was equipped with both strobe lights and rotating beacons for its anti-collision light system. The rotating beacons are single, red lens-covered assemblies with one being mounted on the top of the airplane and the other on the bottom of the fuselage. Being identical assemblies, both beacons rotate clockwise. However, when viewing the beacon lights, the one mounted on the bottom of the aircraft rotates in the opposite direction of the other.

So here I was, performing the normal instrument flight cross check in a dark cockpit, when, out of my peripheral vision, I saw one red light reflecting off the clouds traveling from right to left and the other red light traveling from left to right! Talk about having to fight the tumbling gyros in my head. My workload and concentration went up exponentially!

My co-pilot didn't notice it and I was very reluctant to turn off our last anti-collision lights and proceed with just our position lights. We were under radar coverage and instrument flight rules, which meant there was very little danger of a collision with another aircraft. For the next 30 minutes, I fought the tumbling gyros until our vectored descent for the instrument approach. As soon as we broke out of the clouds into night visual meteorological conditions, my head instantly cleared up and all was well.

We landed, dropped off the Soldiers, taxied back to the runway, picked up our IFR clearance and departed for the return flight to the originating airfield. Upon completion of the mission, the co-pilot and I reviewed the light situation and how we could have better communicated during the flight. We discussed how turning the rotating beacon off was not a big deal in that situation. I also brought up the flight during our next pilot academics training day and, after telling my story, a few gray beards chimed in, "Heck yeah, turn off that light!" Our standardization pilot also reemphasized the safest course of action was to turn off the beacon to prevent vertigo and spatial disorientation. We had a good laugh at my expense.

When you read Army Regulation 95-1, paragraph 2-12b, it states, "Anti-collision lights will be on when aircraft engines are operating except when conditions may cause vertigo or other hazards to safety." I've known that for years, studied it for my annual proficiency and readiness test and often discussed it during safety day and pilot training meetings. As I sat there, I thought, "So this is what that paragraph means!"

Until that night, I didn't know how this looked in flight and it caught me off guard. Now that I have seen it, I understand why the warnings in the ARs aren't just words to study. They're words to live by!

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CORNERING CONTROL: PART I

DAVID L. HOUGH
http://www.soundrider.com

Biker Bob just got back into motorcycling, and his new bike seems to have a mind of its own. His new heavyweight machine didn't respond the same way his 250cc scrambler did 20 years ago. His scrambler would lean just by throwing his weight toward a turn. Today he's on his way home from a ride, approaching the narrow side street where he'll be turning off from the wide boulevard. Bob signals, rolls off the throttle and leans the bike into a right-angle turn. But the bike doesn't seem to want to turn as tightly as Bob wants it to.

He tries leaning it a little farther by leaning his shoulders toward the right and nudging his left knee against the tank, but the front wheel continues to roll wide, across the centerline. Fortunately, the driver of a car coming up the street sees the bike and brakes to avoid a collision. It's embarrassing not being able to control the bike as accurately as he'd like. Bob is not alone. Lots of motorcyclists haven't figured out how to steer a bike accurately, especially a big bike at slower speeds.

The action is down at the front tire contact patch

It's important to understand that accurate two-wheeler steering is a matter of pushing on the handlebar grips, not just leaning weight in the saddle. Obviously, a bike needs to lean toward the curve in order to turn. And you can make it lean just by shifting your weight in the saddle, or nudging the tank with your knees. But the easiest and most accurate way to control lean is by momentarily steering the front wheel opposite the way you want to go. The out-tracking of the front tire forces the bike to lean. To turn left, press on the left grip. To lean and turn right, momentarily press on the right grip. It's called countersteering.

That momentary push on the grips is just the first part of a process of balancing and steering a motorcycle. That initial input is called countersteering because you momentarily steer the front wheel opposite, or counter to the direction you want to go. But as the bike leans over to the angle you need to make the corner, you allow the front wheel to re-center, and even steer slightly toward the curve. Leaned over, front tire traction forces the bike to turn. The bike is held at the same lean angle by gravity being balanced against centrifugal force.

This process repeats over and over again as a rider makes adjustments to balance and direction. Front-end geometry also contributes to balance — the front wheel keeps trying to re-center itself with the bike vertical. But even in a "straight" line, the front wheel weaves slightly from side to side as the bike's geometry and the rider's steering input work together to control balance and direction.

In a turn, you can control the direction of the bike by small adjustments to steering. To turn a little tighter, push the grips a little more toward the curve. That's what Bob needed to do to avoid crossing the centerline and staying within his lane. Press right to lean right. And what Bob needed to avoid those parked cars on his right is to lean a little more left. Press left to lean left.

It might seem easy enough to countersteer, but sometimes a rider's brain subconsciously confuses the issue, signaling the left and right hands to do different things. It's not uncommon for a rider to be pushing on one grip to lean the bike and subconsciously resisting that push with the other hand. If it sometimes seems that your bike just doesn't want to lean even when you are pressing hard toward the direction of turn, it's a hint you need to get your hands coordinated.

Lee Parks, author of the book Total Control, suggests steering with one hand. That is, in a right turn, do the countersteering with your right hand. In a left turn, steer with your left hand. What's important is to make a point of relaxing the other arm to ensure that you aren't subconsciously strong-arming the opposite grip and resisting your "steering" hand. For instance, when turning left, steer with your left hand, and relax your right arm. In a right turn, relax your left arm. If you're having trouble only with left-hand turns, it may be because you're strong-arming the right grip as you manage the throttle. Try flapping your elbow a bit to help relax the "non-steering" arm.

Or, you might try concentrating on moving both grips toward the direction of turn. That is, leaning into a right turn, consciously press both grips toward the right. You might actually be pushing on the right grip and pulling on the left grip, but you can imagine

that it's moving the grips toward the curve that pushes the bike over. Press both grips toward the right to lean right. Press both grips left to lean left. It's OK to lean body weight toward the curve while holding onto both grips. Leaning pulls both grips toward the curve, which is actually countersteering, but focusing on leaning can smooth out the steering input.

It's not just countersteering

While countersteering is the basic technique for accurate steering control, there are some other considerations when cornering, including your cornering line, where you're placing your weight on the bike, and what you're doing with the brakes and throttle.

Editor's note: See more of this topic in the May issue of Knowledge.

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ROCK, MUD AND BLOOD

SGT. JONATHAN CHERRY
D Troop, 2nd Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment
25th Combat Aviation Brigade
Wheeler Army Airfield, Hawaii

The great outdoors is an ideal venue for extreme sports and activities. As a kid, I remember having fun just by going out and exploring. My friends and I would venture into the woods to climb trees or play tag or hide-and-seek.

As I got older, the exploring didn't stop. In fact, it got hazardous. As a kid, I ran through the woods. Now, as an adult, I drive through them. What's different is I'm cognizant of the hazards associated with extreme sports and always take precautions. These are simple precautions that can be applied to all outdoor activities. Simply having a friend come with you is the major one. Two people are always better than one, and three is optimal. Whenever I participate in outdoor activities, I always bring a friend.

Once, a friend and I were dirt biking through the woods. He took a turn too sharply and went down, sliding into a tree. His bike landed on top of him, pinning him to the ground. Fortunately, he was wearing all of his protective gear and was OK, but he landed in an awkward position and couldn't get his bike off of him. Had I not been there, he would've been stuck there for who knows how long.

Something else that gets us into trouble — and I know this from first-hand experience — is testing our limits. An adrenaline rush makes us feel invincible when we're riding through the woods. It's that rush that makes us push the limits to see what we can or can't do. It's the "can't do" that usually hurts. Always know your limits; but if you feel the need to test them, have a plan beforehand. What I mean is if there's a steeper mountain to climb, a bigger creek to jump or a trail to finish in record time, do it with a plan. Don't go out and attempt something on a dare or when someone calls you out. Assess the challenge, take it slow and do your homework before you try something new.

I watched another friend get hurt because someone dared him to free climb a waterfall. He had no safety gear and never attempted a climb like this before. All he had was a determined will to climb and prove the other guy wrong. About halfway up, he slipped and fell about 12 feet onto the rocks. The dare earned him a broken hip and foot. He didn't have a plan or assess his challenge before attempting the climb. I failed my buddy and regret not stopping him from climbing that waterfall. Luckily, my failure only resulted in some broken bones. It could've been much worse, and we both learned a valuable lesson.

Most outdoor enthusiasts love the rush of extreme activities and sports. However, without a plan, fun excursions can end badly. No matter what outdoor activity you participate in, remember to be safe. Plan your challenges when testing your limits and always bring a friend to keep you in line.

FYI

Between fiscal 2007-11, 12 Soldiers lost their lives while participating in off-duty sports-related activities such as hiking, rock climbing, skateboarding, paragliding and parachuting. Sports and recreational activities commonly lead to injuries, but leaders and Soldiers can mitigate the risks if they become actively involved, on and off duty.

Regardless what sport you decide to participate in, make sure you are physically prepared; have the proper training, clothing and equipment to conduct the activity; and use the risk management process during planning and throughout. In addition, as always, take a battle buddy.

To learn more about off-duty safety, check out the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center's Off-Duty Safety Awareness Presentation. Visit https://safety.army.mil/ODSAP today.

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KNOW YOUR NOTAMS

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 KENNETH PEASE
A Company, 224th Military Intelligence Battalion
Hunter Army Airfield, Ga.

In 2004, I was a sergeant in the 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment at Fort Lewis, Wash. To prepare for our upcoming deployment to Iraq, our squadron commander thought it would be a good idea to conduct a border patrol mission. Our squadron was comprised of three cavalry scout troops and one military intelligence troop. The plan for the unmanned aircraft systems platoon was to conduct flight operations along the border between the United States and Mexico.

At the time, we did not have an approved airworthiness release for our Shadow UAS to fly in national airspace. The battalion submitted a request for a Certificate of Authorization six months prior, just as we'd been instructed to do. We railroaded all our equipment and transported it to a staging area at Fort Bliss, Texas. We went to the airfield to set up everything, only to find out our COA wasn't approved. The rest of the squadron conducted their operations as scheduled. Although our Shadows represented a very valuable asset, we weren't allowed to conduct missions.

Now we were at Fort Bliss unable to perform our operations. The platoon sergeant, platoon leader and I came up with a training plan for the following 30 days. We planned to go to White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico and conduct training flights to bring everyone up to readiness level one. In each training area, we had to set up radio frequencies and coordinate with the tower and range control on the procedures we would follow. Part of the coordination process involved reviewing the local notice to airmen (notices containing time-critical aviation information for the airspace being used) that could affect our UAS training. Using an FM radio, every morning we would call range control for any updates to the NOTAMs — but there never were any. We found that a bit odd but continued conducting our operations.

One afternoon, we experienced some problems with one of our Shadows. We hadn't seen anything to be concerned about during the preflight checks, but as soon as it launched, it lost GPS. We had no idea where the Shadow was. Our only clue was to look at the feed from the camera and try to figure the Shadow's location by observing the roads below. The coordinates the Shadow was sending were way off and the aircraft appeared to be bouncing all over the map and flying in circles.

I was the standardization operator for our platoon and had just finished instructing a Soldier on another aircraft. As soon as the GPS failure occurred, the other instructor operator called me over. There was an emergency procedure for this problem, but we'd never really practiced it. After all, we never thought we'd lose our GPS.

Getting the aircraft back on the ground safely was now a major challenge. The Shadow uses a tactical automated landing system, so you need to have a direct line of sight to the aircraft — something which is a bit hard when you don't know where the aircraft is. During normal approaches, we acquire the aircraft at 1,000 feet, but we knew we weren't going to be doing that on this landing. Fortunately, when the Shadow descended to 500 feet, it acquired the normal glide slope and we were able to land it safely and undamaged. Although we spent hours troubleshooting the aircraft, we could not reproduce the problem. We decided to just swap the GPS antenna and call it good to go.

The following day, we launched the same aircraft and, as you might guess, ran into the same problem with the GPS. We safely landed the Shadow and got the next aircraft ready to fly. We launched it and the same thing happened again. Once that occurred, we realized this issue was not isolated to a single aircraft. We were at White Sands Missile Range and, after all, who really knows what all is going on out there? We contacted range control again to report that our GPS systems kept going down. The woman at range control said, "Yeah, I see in the NOTAMs that they are jamming GPS all week from 1200 to 1600 hours." After hearing that, the platoon sergeant and I went to range control to talk about this problem, explaining how we almost lost three aircraft. The woman said, "I had no idea that it would affect you. I didn't know your aircraft had GPS."

This experience taught us a lesson. It is vital that pilots and UAS operators personally review the NOTAMs daily. You can't count on others to alert you to any dangers in the NOTAMs. As it turned out, we were the first Shadow platoon to fly from this location. The woman at range control thought the Shadow flew like a normal remote control plane with a flight control box. Her not understanding the Shadow's requirement for GPS navigation and our failing to personally review the NOTAMs daily almost cost the Army millions of dollars.

The bottom line is that when it comes to aviation safety, the buck always stops with you. Trying to pass the buck by making assumptions or taking shortcuts is the quickest route I know to a smoking hole in the ground. And that is not where you want to be at the end of a mission.

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WHY I WEAR MY SEAT BELT

SGT. 1ST CLASS WILLIAM ADCOCK
Detachment 2, Company D, 1st Battalion, 185th Aviation Regiment
Georgia Army National Guard
Winder, Ga.

By the time you read this, I will have celebrated my 50th birthday. Hitting this milestone gave me a chance to reflect on events that changed my driving style. One hard-learned lesson taught me to ensure I and anyone else riding with me always wears a seat belt.

This isn't a story to tell you to wear your seat belts; it's about just a couple of real-life events from an old guy who has been lucky more than once. First, let me give you a little background. I was born and raised in rural Georgia and started driving in an era very different than today. The Dukes of Hazzard was on TV (I actually got to race the General Lee once while they were filming the show in town) and Smokey and the Bandit was on the big screen. Learning to drive by the seat of your pants in hot rods or jacked-up pickup trucks was the norm, and I was no different.

My first car was a 1974 Dodge Dart that I promptly wrecked. I then got lucky and found a 1955 Chevy with a 350 engine and four-on-the-floor shifter. I'm not sure if this car came with seat belts, but if it did, they were lap belts and never worn by me or any of my buddies who always seemed to find their way in it to cruise around.

If I had to put my finger on the one date that makes me wear my seat belt now, it would be April 3, 1984. I was a young paratrooper at Fort Bragg, N.C., and had recently returned from operations in Grenada. My buddies and I thought we were supermen.

One of the guys in the platoon learned that if you wanted to make a 90-degree turn in the M151A1 jeep, all you had to do was downshift the transmission, turn the wheel in the direction you wanted to go and pull up the emergency brake. And that's what we did. That day, we were going to the field to perform slingload training, and my jeep was loaded with four slings. I was the lead jeep and my platoon sergeant was riding with me. As usual, we were running behind schedule. Trying to make up time, I was going faster than I should have been and the platoon sergeant was not saying much to slow me down. To this day, I don't remember the accident. All I can recall is being about a mile away from the training site and hearing mission instructions.

I learned the rest of the story from my platoon sergeant weeks later. He explained that as we neared a left-hand turn, I attempted to make it by using the emergency brake trick. What we didn't take into account was the extra weight in the jeep (slings), the deep sand on the dirt road and the jeep's brakes (Did I mention the brakes pulled to the left?). We attempted to make the turn and the jeep flipped. My platoon sergeant said he remembered the windshield crushing as we rolled. He was thrown from the vehicle and hit a pine tree. I wasn't as lucky. I ended up hung up in the jeep as it rolled, and the passenger side landed on top, pinning me. I was fortunate that the sand was deep so I was pressed down into it instead of being crushed.

The next thing I remember is waking up in hospital emergency room, not knowing how I got there. After being held overnight, I was released with some broken ribs and scrapes to my arms and face that paled in comparison to my bruised ego. When I returned to duty, I came to the realization that both my platoon sergeant and I were very lucky that day. The accident taught me a valuable lesson about speed and seat belt use, and I made the decision to slow down and buckle up whenever I get into a vehicle.

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ARMED & HAMMERED

TRACEY RUSSELL
U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center
Fort Rucker, Ala.

In today's society, we are bombarded with messages informing us we shouldn't drink and drive because alcohol impairs judgment and slows reaction time, which can make our vehicles deadly weapons. So why do we continue to see Soldiers consuming alcohol and handling firearms, which are designed to be deadly weapons without the addition of alcohol?

Six Soldiers lost their lives in fiscal 2012 to off-duty negligent discharge accidents involving privately owned weapons. Alcohol was involved in at least four of the six accidents. In one case, a group of Soldiers consumed alcohol over an extended period one evening at several locations, taking care to use a designated driver or taxi. Then, upon returning to his residence, one of the Soldiers decided to handle his privately owned weapon. While doing so, he inadvertently disengaged the safety mechanism and discharged a bullet into his head.

In another case, a Soldier reportedly pointed a weapon at his friend, a fellow Soldier, to scare him to cure his hiccups. Sadly, his cure worked, and his friend will never have the hiccups again. The Soldier now faces manslaughter charges because he accidently discharged the weapon, killing his friend.

As a citizen of the United States, you have a constitutional right under the Second Amendment to keep and bear arms for lawful purposes. You also have a legal right to consume alcohol if you are 21 or older. However, conventional wisdom and Army statistics indicate that exercising both of these rights at the same time has the serious potential of resulting in a wrong that may be fatal. If you are handling a firearm, wait until you have safely stored your weapon before enjoying that "adult" beverage. If you are already enjoying that beverage, handle your weapons some other time.

Whether you use a weapon for hunting, target shooting or personal defense, your weapons-handling experiences will be far more enjoyable if you protect yourself, family members, friends and fellow Soldiers by handling your weapon in a responsible manner. Read the owner's manual, sign up for a class, know appropriate laws and policies, always THINK weapons safety and make sure you and your weapon are never loaded at the same time. Don't be armed and hammered!

FYI

When handling weapons on the range, in combat or off duty, personnel must be aware of and use proper procedures to avoid negligent discharges and other accidents. The U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center has a centralized collection of online resources for safe weapons handling. The Range & Weapons Safety Toolbox hosts various references and materials, including publications, training support packages, multimedia products, ammunition and explosives information, and safety messages and alerts. By using this toolbox, Soldiers and leaders can minimize risks and sustain combat readiness.

Remember to always THINK weapons safety:
Treat every weapon as if it is loaded.
Handle every weapon with care.
Identify the target before you fire.
Never point the muzzle at anything you do not intend to shoot.
Keep the weapon on safe and your finger off the trigger until you intend to fire.

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TANGLING WITH A TOMCAT

LT. COL. SHAWN KERRIGAN
Virginia Army National Guard Maneuver Training Center
Fort Picket, Va.

Editor's note: The Virginia Army National Guard's Reconnaissance and Interdiction Detachment supports the Tidewater Drug Enforcement Agency's counterdrug missions. At the time of this incident, the author commanded the detachment. During a mission in the fall of 1996, a failure in air traffic control communication nearly led a Navy F-14 Tomcat to claw the author's OH-58 from the sky.

The mission called for one OH-58 with forward-looking infrared to be positioned at Norfolk (Va.) International Airport for an ongoing counterdrug surveillance operation. My instructor pilot and I departed Richmond early on a Monday morning for Norfolk IAP with our crew chief behind us driving a van containing supplies for the week.

Two days into our mission, my IP and I, along with a Drug Enforcement Agency agent in the back, departed Norfolk and starting tracking a suspect traveling by automobile in Portsmouth. When the suspect starting traveling east toward Virginia Beach, we transitioned from Norfolk airspace to Naval Air Station Oceana for flight following. Oceana tower informed us to stay at 1,000 feet directly over the active runway since there were several F-14 Tomcat and F/A-18 jet fighters training at the airport. As instructed, we hovered at 1,000 feet and observed the suspect park his car at a local mall and go inside.

With the suspect now stationary, ground units moved in to continue surveillance while we broke contact to refuel at the airport. As the ground units were getting into position, a call came over the UHF radio clearing an F-14 Tomcat to Fentress Airfield. Fentress is a few miles south of Oceana and is used by Navy pilots to simulate carrier landings. I listened for Oceana tower to inform the F-14 pilot that we were operating at 1,000 feet and to stay clear, but Oceana never made the advisory. As a result, the F-14 came roaring off the runway and broke left, climbing directly at us. I quickly dropped the collective to lose altitude and was shocked to see the F-14 pass within 50 feet of us. I saw F-14 pilot's face clearly and noticed he was as surprised as I was.

As we descended, I was shaking with anger — not to mention fear. My first instinct was to land near the base of the tower to voice my dissatisfaction with the tower's flight-following procedures. However, my IP quickly calmed me down and reminded me that we needed to stay on task and mission.

This close-call reinforced the absolute necessity of maintaining situation awareness at all times. Even with flight following within controlled airspace, you cannot afford to lose SA by completely relying on the air traffic controllers. Had I not been monitoring the radios and caught Oceana's failure to warn the Tomcat of our position, I might not be here today. I never want to see an F-14 or any other aircraft that close to me in flight again.

There is an old saying among pilots that it's important to make sure your number of landings matches your number of takeoffs. If you want to do that, SA had better be one of the tools you always have in your toolbox.

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UNSAFE AT ANY SPEED

CAPT. CHRIS TYLER
359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade
U.S. Army Reserve Center
Fort Gordon, Ga.

Is multitasking dangerous? It is if you are driving a motor vehicle. See if you recognize anyone described in this article.

Perhaps you know the type of overachiever who claims he can effectively carry out many tasks all at the same time. I'm one of those people. I can't help it. Still, I know deep down I am more effective when I focus on one activity at a time.

During this modern electronic era, information moves faster and people expect responses no matter where you are or what you're doing. Additionally, we live in a chaotic world, and staying focused has become more difficult than ever. The battle for our attention is a zero-sum game, meaning there is only so much of it to go around. Every time we attempt to perform one more additional task at the same time, less attention goes to everything else.

In truth, our attention goes back and forth between the tasks. In an office setting, multitasking is not necessarily very dangerous to yourself or others. On the road, however, losing focus can be deadly. Driving by itself involves keeping track of many details, all while maneuvering a heavy hunk of metal and rubber down a road, side by side with other drivers.

Some distractions are outside the vehicle, such as other cars, pedestrians and cyclists. Signs and billboards can also be distracting. Let's add to this some distractions inside the vehicle. Having a radio on seems pretty passive and not much of a distraction, unless what the person is talking about is interesting and draws some of your attention, as in a talk show or news program. What if you have one or more passengers riding along, involving you in a discussion? These are other forms of distraction.

According to www.distraction.gov, the official U.S. government website for distracted driving, "In 2010 alone, over 3,000 people were killed in distracted driving crashes." The site also reports, "Distracted driving is any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving."

All distractions endanger driver, passenger and bystander safety. Because text messaging requires visual, manual and cognitive attention from the driver, it is by far the most alarming distraction, according to the National Highway Safety Traffic Administration. Other examples of distractions include:

•Using a cellphone

•Eating and drinking

•Talking to passengers

•Grooming

•Reading, including maps

•Using a navigation system

•Watching a video

•Adjusting a radio or MP3 player

I cannot tell you how many times I have seen a car swerve out of its lane, only to notice that the driver has a cellphone pressed hard against his ear. The driver may have been seeing the road with their eyes, but only a percentage of their attention was actually going to their driving. Do yourself, your passengers and your fellow drivers on the road a favor. Avoid distracting activities while driving. Put your full attention onto the task at hand and enjoy a safe ride.

U.S. ARMY
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U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

FYI

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

•Drivers who use handheld devices are four times more likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves.

•Text messaging creates a crash risk which is 23 times worse than driving while not distracted.

•Sending or receiving a text takes a driver's eyes from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds, the equivalent driving the length of an entire football field, blind, while traveling 55 mph.

•Headset cellphone use is not substantially safer than handheld use.

•Driving while using a cellphone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37 percent.

For additional information on distracted driving, visit http://www.distraction.gov/content/get-the-facts/facts-and-statistics.html

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FOD FLOP

STAFF SGT. ARMANDO RODRIGUEZ
2nd General Support Aviation Battalion, 1st Aviation Regiment
Fort Riley, Kan.

Back when I was a young buck sergeant, I got my teeth "kicked in" due to improper tool accountability. Getting one's teeth kicked in isn't as bad as it sounds; a little corrective training never hurt anyone. But this particular event inspired me to reach what I thought was an unreachable Soldier.

I was a maintenance sergeant for a Chinook company. My guys had just completed aircraft maintenance on the flightline and I inspected all of their work. As I was on my way to pull a technical inspector away from his air-conditioned office, I realized a small task remained. I instructed one of my junior privates — whose heart was always in the right place — to replace an improper safety wire while I went to get the TI. I reminded him to do a foreign object damage check after he was done, and reinforced my guidance a stern eye and nothing more. The Soldier completed the task and went back to the office. I returned with the TI, who asked if I had looked over everything. As a new, hard-charging noncommissioned officer, I replied, "Absolutely," forgetting I hadn't checked my Soldier's safety wire work.

The TI found a set of wire cutters and some extra wire on the rotating swashplate assembly. He not so calmly explained that if that assembly failed, there is no backup system and pilots can't park on a cloud to wait for help. My platoon leader just happened to be in the area and decided to jump in and assist with my "lesson." The undeniable lesson I learned that day was no matter what happens, I am responsible for the actions of my Soldiers.

After the smoke cleared (and I collected what pieces of my hindquarters were left), I went back to the office. My guys were patiently waiting for me to release them. I asked if they had everything and, of course, they all said yes. I then pulled out the wire cutter, and one head dropped. I didn't go on the tangent I had rehearsed in my head on my way back from the flightline. Instead, I released everyone.

The FOD culprit stayed back and apologized. Apparently, he'd heard about the one-way conversation I received. I asked if he knew any of the people who were going to fly that aircraft later that evening, and he said he didn't. I then took him back out to the helo and had him do another FOD check. Meanwhile, I spoke with the pilot, who I respected greatly, and asked if I could try something. He agreed. I told my private to look at the pilot and tell me about him. He didn't say anything because he didn't know the pilot. I proceeded to tell him about the pilot as well as his wife and sons. The private's eyes started to water. I asked him, "What if your tool resulted in this man's death? What would you say to his family? How many eulogies will it take to get you to do your job right?" He was silent.

That's the business maintainers are in. It's not just about taking the fight to the enemy; it's about making sure our warfighters have fully functioning equipment to make it home every time. A FOD check should be conducted frequently and consistently around work areas, especially motor pools, flightlines or any maintenance facilities. We give them the best product available, regardless how terrible the weather is or how tired we are. In our world, just like in yours, there is no room for complacency. One eulogy is a price we should never be willing to pay.

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KNOW IT OR BLOW IT

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 GLENN STEWART
A Company, 3rd Battalion,
159th Aviation Regiment, Attack Reconnaissance Battalion
Illesheim, Germany

Going through flight school, we all hated Chapters 5 and 9 of the – 10. We asked ourselves, "Why do we have to know all this crap? What does it matter if I know all these steps verbatim, with every underlined sentence memorized and every airspeed on the tip of my tongue?" Well, about a year and a half ago, I learned why this is.

In October 2011, I was on a training mission to Ramstein, Germany, flying 750 feet above ground level at 100 knots indicated airspeed. At the time, I only had 70 hours of pilot in command time in the Apache and I had yet to have my first real emergency. My co-pilot gunner was flying and we were about five minutes from entering Ramstein's airspace from the east. I looked inside to check the visual flight rules arrival/departure charts one last time when my CPG asked if I smelled something. I did and, noticing we were near an industrial area, told him it was coming from the smoke stacks. I made contact with tower and let them know I was three miles from the first reporting point.

As I focused my attention back at the arrival charts, something caught my eye. I thought I saw a small bit of smoke. As I lowered the chart, a steady stream of smoke started ascending from the console where the windshield wiper knob was located between my legs. I quickly threw the chart out of the way. All I could think of was, "I've got an electrical fire!"

I immediately let my front-seater know I had smoke coming into my crew station. He started an emergency descent, and I started making mayday calls. After I made contact with tower, the radios went eerily quiet. I then started to initiate the emergency procedure — but couldn't remember it. After two or three seconds went by (which seemed like two or three minutes), I assumed the controls and instructed my CPG to turn off both generators. At the same time, I identified a "Y" in a farm road about 200 meters south of a small town at our 3 o'clock and told him we needed to land there. As we approached on final, my CPG backed me up with obstacles and apparent AGL altitude. On short final, we discussed actions upon landing. He would get out as I was shutting down the engines and guarding the controls. As he was exiting the aircraft, I turned to my checklist to read the EPs aloud. It read, "Gen 1 and Gen 2 – Off" and "Land as soon as possible."

Hindsight being 20/20, I remember the smoke stopped as soon as we turned off both generators. In fact, there was no real threat once the first step of the EP had been completed. We made a safe landing. After the downed aircraft recovery team arrived, we found out the windshield wiper motor had arched. From the time I actually saw smoke to the time we were on the ground shutting off engines was less than 45 seconds.

I now understand why it is so important for us PCs to not just know Chapters 5 and 9, but to have them ingrained into our souls. And not only should we have these procedures burned into our consciousness, we need to stress the importance of them to those who will follow in our path. In most cases, these procedures were written in blood. That's a price we don't need to pay twice.

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WHAT WOULD YOU DO TO SAVE A LIFE?

SGT. MIRANDA GAINER
164th Theater Airfield Operations Group
Fort Rucker, Ala.

Knowing your father caused a serious auto accident while driving under the influence is something you never forget.

As children, we're taught right from wrong by our parents or a responsible adult in our lives. Then, as teenagers and into adulthood, it's up to us to remember what we learned about things such as drinking and driving. We understand it has severe consequences for the person behind the wheel and others. We know we should drive safely to protect ourselves, our passengers and other motorists. Our parents, driver's education instructors and others stress safety on the road and the dangers of drinking and driving.

However, some people believe they are above the law or think, "I can handle my liquor, no problem. I can make the ride home since I live nearby." Some may escape the consequences, while others die or go to jail for that attitude. You may feel like, "We hear this all the time." I felt the same way as you did until drinking and driving hit close to my heart and family. Let me tell you the story of the night my sister and I could have been victims of drinking and driving.

One Halloween, while my father was stationed in Bitburg, Germany, my sister and I wanted to ride with him to his buddy's house so we could play with our friends. My father said we couldn't go with him because we needed to go to a church function with our mother. But he changed his mind and said we could ride with him after all. Then, our mother said we did have to go to church with her. That was the end of it, so off we went to the church function. Little did we know how important that decision would prove to be.

On our way home from the function, we passed the scene of an auto accident that had just occurred. All of us hoped the occupants were not seriously injured as we continued to our home. After going to bed, we were awakened by a family friend who told us to get up and get dressed because we were going to their house. We asked where our parents were and what was going on.

The family friend just told us, "Just get your things. I will explain everything later."

When we saw our mother the following morning, we asked what was going on. She told us to sit down and then explained the person involved in the horrible accident we saw the previous night was our father, and he was the cause. I remembered the accident scene and how the front of the car was in the median while rest of it was on the other side of the road. That's where my sister and I would have been riding had we been in the vehicle. The vehicle had split in half from the force of the accident. My father was badly hurt and others were injured. It all happened five minutes from our home.

To this day, I wonder why my father didn't just stay the night at his friend's house or call for a ride. And why wasn't he or his friend aware that he was impaired? If my sister and I were with him, would he have gotten drunk? We learned a hard lesson from the accident. Simply put: If you see a friend, family member or even a stranger who is in no condition to be behind wheel, speak up and take action. You might save a life.

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HOOP DEMONS

JEREMY BRADEN

Here's a pop quiz: What sport leads all others in injuries for troops in combat theaters? The answer may surprise you — it's basketball. Nearly 300 basketball-related accidents were reported to the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center between fiscal 2008 and 2012, and the cost associated with those accidents was more than $1.5 million! And it's no secret that many more basketball injuries go unreported. I realized anyone is susceptible to these injuries when I became a victim of the hoop demon during my second tour in Iraq.

We'd just returned from a patrol when some of the guys started a game. I changed into my physical fitness uniform, walked back to the court and sat with the others, waiting for my turn to play. Once I got into the game, it was a nice change of pace from being on patrol. When one of my teammates knocked away the ball, I chased after it to keep it from going out of bounds. Little did I know that another player had the same idea. As we both reached for the ball, we bumped heads.

He was OK, but I got the worst of it. Above my right eye, blood started trickling down onto my face. One of the medics came over and looked at the cut and told me to head to the aid station. At first, I objected but eventually relented. I figured, "Who am I to argue with the guy who took care of us?"

We got to the aid station and talked to the surgeon, who turned out to be a fellow Kentuckian. He gave me an ice-cold Ale-8 (a Kentucky soft drink) and told me he'd need to sew up my injury. Five stitches and a bandage later, the medic and I walked back to our rooms. Luckily, stitches were the extent of my injury treatment and I got to stay in the fight. However, sometimes a "harmless" basketball game leads to more serious injuries, including broken bones and pulled muscles.

Many times, a game of basketball turns into battle ball. Some folks think they can take out their anger on a supervisor or co-worker, and Soldiers and games get pretty heated. That shouldn't be the case. Extracurricular sports should be for relaxation — to take one's mind off the things outside the wire.

Supervisors need to keep an eye on troops or workers playing sports, maintaining order and intervening when an activity gets heated. However, never get involved in an altercation. Even as a Soldier or worker, you should not be hostile toward co-workers. You have enough to worry about while deployed.

Finally, always warm up properly. Many people think they can jump right into a game and end up getting injured. Stretch your legs and arms and warm up your ankles with some moves similar to those you'll be doing in the game. Taking a few minutes to get your body prepared for physical activity can help you avoid the hoop demon.

FYI

In 2010, sports and exercise were the third leading cause of unintentional injury hospitalizations for the active non-deployed Army. Data from a survey of active-duty Soldiers showed that more than half (59 percent) are injured each year (Status of Forces Survey, 2008). Almost 30 percent of Soldiers have an injury from sports, exercise and recreational activity. Sports and exercise are the leading cause of non-battle injuries that were air evacuated from Iraq and Afghanistan (2001-2010). Basketball, physical training, football and weightlifting are the four leading sports/exercise activities that resulted in injuries that were air evacuated. In numerous field investigations conducted by the U.S. Army Public Health Command, physical training and sports were the most frequent cause of injury that resulted in sick-call visits and limited duty days.

Editor's note: Information provided by Keith Hauret, Epidemiologist in the USAPHC Injury Prevention Program.

ACCIDENT BRIEFS

ROTARY-WING

CH-47F
Class C
- The aircraft was transporting a disabled OH-58D(R) when the load became unstable. The crew put the disabled aircraft back on the ground to reconfigure the load. Upon recovery completion, it was discovered the wire strike protection system on the OH-58D(R) had been damaged.

UH-60A
Class C
- The main rotor blade was damaged by a C17 panel that became airborne in the rotor wash during takeoff.

- The aircraft contacted the ground during an APART autorotation and sustained damage to the tail wheel and leading edge of the stabilator.

UAS

RQ20A
Class C
- The crew experienced an uncommanded flight input, after which the systementered a nose-low attitude and impacted the ground.

PERSONNEL INJURY

Class A
- A Soldier died after collapsing during physical training.

- A Soldier died while participating in Airborne operations training.

PMV-4
Class A
- A Soldier died when the vehicle he was riding in struck a tree after the driver lost control, overcorrected and left the highway. Seat belt use was not reported.

- A Soldier was killed when his vehicle left the roadway and struck a culvert. A Marine riding with the Soldier also died when he was ejected from the vehicle. Local authorities suspect alcohol and speed as contributing factors.

- A Soldier was riding in his vehicle, which was being driven by a friend, when they struck a stalled tractor-trailer that was partially on the road. The Soldier was not wearing his seat belt and pronounced dead at the scene.

- A Soldier died when his vehicle crossed the centerline and collided head-on with a tractor-trailer.

- A Soldier was ejected and killed when his car overturned after veering off a freeway.

- A Soldier died when he lost control of his vehicle, which left the road and struck a tree. The Soldier was reportedly not wearing his seat belt and died on impact. His passenger was wearing her seat belt and was hospitalized for injuries.

- A Soldier died after he was stuck by a passing vehicle.

- A Soldier was killed when his vehicle, reportedly traveling at a high rate of speed, left the road and struck a utility pole. Seat belt use was not reported.

- A Soldier and his civilian passenger died when he lost control of his vehicle, entered the opposing lane of traffic and collided with an approaching vehicle. Seat belt use was not reported.

- A Soldier died after he lost control of his vehicle in a curve and struck a tree.

Editor's note: Information published in the accident briefs section is based on preliminary loss reports submitted by units and is subject to change. For more information on selected accident briefs, email usarmy.rucker.hqda-secarmy.list.safe-knowledge@mail.mil.